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# Promoting development through the reduction and prevention of armed violence

## Report of the Secretary-General

*Summary*

Armed violence — the intentional, threatened or actual use of arms to inflict death or injury — takes many forms, ranging from political to criminal to interpersonal violence, and appears in a wide range of contexts. Armed violence not only destroys lives, it also damages infrastructure and property, limits the delivery of public services, undermines investment in human, social and economic capital, and contributes to unproductive expenditures on security services. Armed violence undermines development and constitutes an impediment to the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals.

The present report examines different aspects of the relationship between armed violence and development. Across diverse contexts, the risk factors and effects of armed violence are often similar. Young men make up the majority of perpetrators, as well as victims, of armed violence. In certain situations — including in some armed conflicts — women, girls and boys suffer from acute forms of sexual violence. Factors such as weak institutions, systemic economic and horizontal inequalities, exclusion of minority groups, unequal gender relations, limited education opportunities, persistent unemployment, organized crime and illicit markets, and the availability of firearms, alcohol and drugs play an important role in shaping the onset, duration and severity of armed violence.

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The United Nations system, regional and subregional organizations, national and local governments, and civil society organizations have mobilized to prevent and reduce armed violence through evidence-based interventions, but responses need to be scaled up. Armed violence prevention and reduction efforts must be carefully designed, targeted and monitored. Programming options include interventions related to conflict prevention and peacebuilding, to interventions targeting demand and risk factors at the individual, relationship and societal levels.

The report places particular emphasis on tackling the risks and effects of armed violence and underdevelopment. This includes implementing existing conventions and agreements associated with armed violence and development; improving the effectiveness of armed violence prevention and reduction policies through investment in the production, analysis and use of evidence; strengthening capacities to diagnose, articulate strategies and implement programmes; developing measurable goals, targets and indicators for armed violence prevention and reduction; building partnerships among the United Nations system and with regional organizations, national authorities and civil society to ensure coherent policy and programming; increasing resources for armed violence prevention and reduction; and fostering greater international action.

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# I. Introduction

1. In paragraph 2 of its resolution 63/23, the General Assembly requested the Secretary-General to seek the views of Member States on the interrelation between armed violence and development and, in close consultation with the relevant agencies, funds and programmes of the United Nations system, and with the three United Nations regional centres for peace and disarmament,[1] to submit a report to the General Assembly at its sixty-fourth session. The present report is submitted in response to that request. In addition, 33 Member States, as well as two civil society organizations, have submitted their views on the relationship between armed violence and development in response to the request contained in the resolution.[2]

2. Armed violence has a negative effect on human, social, political and economic development. When associated with conflict, it triggers forced displacement, destroys infrastructure and human and social capital, and leaves enduring scars that have a long-term impact on reconstruction and reconciliation efforts. When associated with large-scale criminal activity, it can undermine State institutions, spread fear and insecurity and contribute to a climate of impunity. It both contributes to and is sustained by transnational crime, such as the illicit trafficking of persons, and drugs, arms and other illegal goods. When associated with interpersonal and gender-based violence, it can destroy the fabric of families and communities and leave survivors and victims with deep psychological and physical scars. In all cases, armed violence has negative effects that go beyond the pain and suffering of the immediate victims and survivors.

3. Armed violence also undermines peace and security. In severely affected countries it may endanger political stability, undermine the rule of law, and hinder progress towards the Millennium Development Goals. At the 2005 World Summit, States Members of the United Nations recognized that "development, peace and security and human rights are interlinked and mutually reinforcing" (A/60/1). The issue of armed violence is one that concerns all Member States, since the State has the primary responsibility to provide for the security of its citizens and promote respect for and observance of human rights. Armed violence, whether political, criminal or interpersonal in nature, challenges the State and undermines the bonds between States and their citizens.

4. A number of Member States as well as a wide range of institutions in the United Nations system have recognized the negative impact of armed violence on development. It is clear from the submissions by Member States and from the information gathered for the present report, that many Member States, international organizations and civil society organizations are actively engaged in efforts to prevent and reduce armed violence. Efforts by these stakeholders to develop holistic approaches to policies and programmes to prevent or reduce violence should be supported in order to enhance the prospects for human, economic, social and political development. Practical responses will require cooperation between and

[1] Three regional centres for peace and disarmament within the Office for Disarmament Affairs of the Secretariat were established with a mandate to assist Member States of their respective regions with the implementation of activities related to peace and disarmament, in cooperation with relevant regional and subregional organizations.

[2] The views submitted by Member States can be found at http://www.un.org/disarmament/convarms/SALW/Docs/AVMemberStatesViews.

across different agencies and organizations, and the implementation of innovative policies and programmes that link international and regional organizations, national and local governments, and civil society. The present report should strengthen and encourage further such efforts.

## II. Understanding armed violence and development

5. The six United Nations agencies jointly collaborating on the Armed Violence Prevention Programme[3] have adopted the following definition of armed violence: the intentional use of physical force, threatened or actual, with arms, against oneself, another person, group, community or State that results in loss, injury, death and/or psychosocial harm to an individual or individuals and that can undermine a community s, country's or region's security and development achievements and prospects.[4] This definition is based upon the definition of violence unanimously endorsed by the World Health Assembly.[5]

6. The State has a monopoly on the legitimate use of force and armed violence in order to protect and safeguard its people and institutions, consistent with international legal obligations, humanitarian and human rights principles. The State is also responsible for determining the circumstances in which individuals can lawfully use force and armed violence and for ensuring full respect for and observance of the international and domestic legal standards on the use of force and armed violence.[6]

7. The changing nature of armed violence over the past three decades, including in many situations in which the United Nations has been active in peace operations, post-conflict reconstruction, or development assistance, has blurred the line between armed conflict and crime, and between politically motivated and economically motivated violence. Economically motivated wars, the growth of regional networks involving both transnational organized criminal gangs and non-State armed groups, and persistently high levels of interpersonal violence, both in some post-conflict situations and in some settings that have not experienced armed conflict, make clear

[3] The Armed Violence Prevention Programme is a United Nations joint programme contributing to a more coherent and evidence-guided approach to armed violence and its prevention. Initiated in 2006 as a collaborative project between the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the World Health Organization (WHO), Phase 2 is a joint initiative between UNDP, the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), the United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat), the Office for Disarmament Affairs of the Secretariat, the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) and WHO.

[4] For similar definitions see: Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), *Armed Violence Reduction: Enabling Development* (Paris: OECD, 2009), p. 28, which defines armed violence as "the use or threatened use of weapons to inflict injury, death or psychosocial harm, which undermines development"; or Geneva Declaration on Armed Violence and Development, Armed Violence Prevention and Reduction: A Challenge for Achieving the Millennium Development Goals, Background Paper (Geneva: Geneva Declaration Secretariat, 2008), p. 10, which defines it as "the intentional use of illegitimate force (actual or threatened) with arms or explosives against a person, group, community, or state, which undermines people-centred security and/or sustainable development".

[5] WHA 56.24.

[6] Such principles are reflected, for example, in the United Nations Basic Principles on the Use of Force and Firearms by Law Enforcement Officials (adopted at the eighth United Nations Congress on the Prevention of Crime and the Treatment of Offenders).

distinctions between different forms of violence often practically and analytically difficult.

8. In a number of regions, the excessive accumulation of small arms has been instrumental in shaping the onset, severity and duration of armed violence, and its negative consequences. Because they are widely available and easy to use, firearms are the most prominent tools in armed conflicts and in criminal and interpersonal violence in non-conflict settings. Up to 60 per cent of violent deaths worldwide can be attributed to firearms, in both conflict and non-conflict settings.[7] This relationship between small arms, armed violence and development has been made explicit in General Assembly resolutions (e.g., resolution 60/68) and in the 2008 report of the Secretary-General to the Security Council on small arms (S/2008/258).

9. Along with violence and conflict specialists, economists, public health experts, criminologists, urban geographers, and others have started to scrutinize the dynamics of armed violence and the relationships between armed violence and development. They have found that armed violence is often concentrated both geographically and among particular groups in society. While certain areas of a country or city may function normally, other areas can suffer from chronic high levels of armed violence. Peripheral, marginal and neglected regions such as border areas and city slums are often vulnerable to the growth of informal and predatory power structures based on force and violence.

10. Different forms of violence can be causally linked, and can reinforce each other in a vicious spiral. The high incidence of gender-based violence,[8] especially sexual violence, reported in some conflict zones highlights the fact that the violence associated with armed conflict is often not confined to combatants but spills over into violence committed against civilians.[9] High rates of criminal violence in a number of post-conflict settings also underscore how the legacy of conflict can pose an ongoing obstacle to reconstruction, peace and security. While different forms of violence require policy and programmatic responses targeting specific risk and protective factors, it is important to avoid treating forms of violence in isolation from each other. Fragmented approaches may hinder the development of comprehensive strategies for the prevention and reduction of armed violence, and impede the development of more coherent international, regional, national and local policies.

11. The concept of armed violence encompasses the spectrum of conflict, post-conflict, crime-related, and interpersonal, including gender-based forms of violence. It has a wider scope than conflict prevention, and includes peacebuilding, development, public health and criminal justice strategies and approaches. It involves stakeholders from the disarmament, development, urban security, public health, conflict prevention, criminal justice and rule of law, gender and children, counter-terrorism, and human rights communities. The General Assembly in its resolution 63/23 recognizes these linkages.

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[7] *The Global Burden of Armed Violence* (Geneva: Geneva Declaration Secretariat, 2008), p. 75.

[8] For a definition, see articles 1 and 2 of the United Nations Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women (General Assembly resolution 48/104).

[9] See Security Council resolutions 1820 (2008) and 1325 (2000) on women, peace and security. In 2007 the United Nations also established the United Nations Action against Sexual Violence in Conflict (UN Action), uniting the efforts of 12 United Nations agencies in this area.

**Armed violence and development**

12. The complex links between armed violence and underdevelopment — with armed violence being both a cause and consequence of underdevelopment — are becoming better recognized. Whether in societies wracked by armed conflict, criminal or interpersonal violence, widespread armed violence can impede the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals. Practical evidence of how and when armed violence undermines development prospects, and of effective strategies to prevent and reduce armed violence, is indispensable in assisting affected societies to meet their Millennium Development Goal targets.

13. Levels of criminal and non-conflict armed violence have declined in many developing regions over the past decades, suggesting that social, economic and political development would gradually strengthen State institutions and lead to an increase in public security and safety. But in the past 20 years armed violence has increased in some regions and States where economic and social development was advancing, highlighting the fact that armed violence has its own dynamic and needs to be treated as a public policy issue in its own right.

14. Today, many States find themselves caught in a "conflict trap" where continued armed violence and insecurity cripples development prospects.[10] Many of the world's poorest countries are affected by or emerging from armed conflict, most of them in Africa.[11] Similarly, many States in non-conflict settings are caught in an equivalent "violence trap", where high levels of organized criminal and interpersonal violence, and the resulting insecurity, impose great costs on fragile State institutions, discourage investment and lead to unproductive household, community and government spending on security and public order.[12] High levels of homicidal violence and criminality are concentrated in a number of lower- and middle-income countries, especially in parts of Latin America and the Caribbean and of Africa.

**Costs and consequences of armed violence**

15. The socio-economic and human consequences of armed violence are far reaching. More than 540,000 men, women and children die from violence each year, the vast majority of them in countries not affected by war, but instead by high levels of interpersonal violence, some of which involves organized gangs or armed groups.[13] Many more die of indirect effects such as premature mortality caused by displacement and loss of access to food, water, basic health care and other necessities.

16. Many of those killed and injured — the majority of whom are young men — are at the peak of their productive lives. As such, armed violence exacts a major

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[10] Paul Collier et al., *Breaking the Conflict Trap: Civil War and Development Policy* (World Bank Policy Research Reports) (Washington: World Bank and Oxford University Press, 2003).

[11] At least 13 of the 20 States at the bottom of the Human Development Index are affected by or emerging from conflict. See *Human Development Report* 2007/2008 (http://hdr.undp.org/en/reports/global/hdr2007-2008).

[12] See *Crime, Violence, and Development: Trends, Costs, and Policy Options in the Caribbean*, Report No. 37820, A Joint Report by the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime and the Latin America and the Caribbean Region of the World Bank (Washington: World Bank, 2007).

[13] *The Global Burden of Armed Violence*, p. 2.

socio-economic toll, particularly in low- and middle-income countries and on the poor and vulnerable segments of society.

17. In addition to the deaths and injuries caused, armed violence traumatizes individuals and communities. These consequences, although not easily visible, have a real and negative impact on prospects for and processes of reconciliation and reconstruction, within and between communities.[14]

18. Armed violence also has a negative effect on the economy. War-affected countries on average experience a reduction in the annual growth rate of their economies of about 2 per cent of gross domestic product (GDP) and low growth rates persist after the fighting stops. Moreover, the global cost of non-conflict violence to societies around the world, considered as productivity losses due to premature death, can be as much as $160 billion a year.[15]

19. Armed violence also has wider negative economic effects throughout society. It destroys lives and property, undermines the potential for local and foreign investment, and contributes to the loss of vital skills for societies when human capital migrates away. It contributes to excessive and unproductive expenditures on policing and security services. The impacts of high levels of armed violence on national economies cannot be overstated, and can equal several percentage points of GDP each year.[16]

20. Armed violence is both a domestic and international security concern, and has regional and transnational dimensions. It can spread across territorial borders and trigger large-scale displacement of people, such as has been seen during clashes between rival pastoralist groups, or among criminal groups that traffic arms from country to country. Organized criminal syndicates, diaspora groups and terrorist networks can also directly influence the local dynamics of armed violence.

21. Armed violence is highly gendered in both its causes and consequences. Across all affected societies, young males are the most common perpetrators, as well as immediate victims, of armed attacks. It is deeply rooted in unequal sociocultural norms, and in structural relationships of inequality between women and men. Recognition of the gendered nature of armed violence must inform policy and programmatic responses. If the gendered aspects of armed violence, including the male social roles that often underpin armed violence and the structural subordination of women and girls in larger society are not addressed, some of the key root causes of armed violence and the different impacts that it has on girls, boys, women and men might be neglected.

22. Gender identities are often significantly influenced by armed conflict or exposure to violence. A breakdown in social norms connected to the protection of women, children and other vulnerable groups has sometimes led to a pervasive culture of violence against the most vulnerable.

23. Although older adolescents and young men may be the most prominent direct victims, women, pre-adolescent boys and girls also suffer both as direct and indirect

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[14] International Committee of the Red Cross and Ipsos, *Our World, Your Move: Views from the Field* (Geneva: ICRC/Ipsos, 2009).

[15] *The Global Burden of Armed Violence*, p. 89.

[16] "Making Societies more Resilient to Violence", Conflict, Crime and Violence Team, Social Development Department, World Bank (Washington, 2009).

victims of armed violence. In its resolutions 1325 (2000) and 1820 (2008), the Security Council has emphasized that gender-based violence and especially sexual violence is widespread in many conflict zones, and that the perpetrators are seldom brought to justice. Victimization of women and children through gender-based violence including rape, violence in the home, and sexual exploitation is often under-recorded but is an important consequence of armed violence. The impact of violence is often felt at the level of the family, where children or women have to take on the role of caretakers of victims or become de facto heads of households. In situations where they have less access to livelihood opportunities, women and children struggle to provide for their families and often suffer from deepening levels of poverty, which may carry down into the following generation.

24. The presence and persistence of armed violence often indicates a failure in the provision of public security, the rule of law, and effective prevention measures. Acute levels of collective armed violence signal a fragile situation in which the State does not exercise a monopoly over the legitimate use of force in its territory, or uses force excessively to quell dissent or stop crime. In some contexts, civilians have reported feeling better protected by informal armed groups than by the public authorities, but the absence of the impartial provision of government services, including basic protection against insecurity, should be seen as an obvious problem in any region.

**Risk factors for violence**

25. Most situations of armed violence share some risk factors. Policies and programmes to prevent and reduce armed violence must be sensitive to the particular context in which armed violence occurs, but can also build upon comprehensive evidence based around addressing these risk factors. Understanding the risk factors driving violence is essential for designing and implementing effective violence prevention and reduction strategies. It is especially important to document and analyse key risk and resilience factors shaping the onset and duration of armed violence.

26. Community and social level risk factors that can increase the likelihood and severity of armed violence include social, political and economic inequalities, the systematic exclusion of minority groups; persistent unemployment and underemployment; perceptions of economic deprivation or grievances; resource scarcity and competition; easy access to narcotics and firearms; and sudden economic shocks. Factors such as limited educational and employment opportunities in areas with a sustained high birth rate, penetration of society by organized crime and illicit markets; and unequal gender relations, may further amplify risks.[17]

27. Weak governance structures also act as risk factors, including an ineffective criminal justice system, high levels of impunity, public security failure, corruption, widespread or excessive use of force by State institutions, lack of effective service delivery, limited investment in social policies and programming, or other deficits that compromise effective governance.

[17] Mayra Buvinic, Andrew Morrison and Michael Shifter, *Violence in Latin America and the Caribbean: A Framework for Action*, Sustainable Development Department, Inter-American Development Bank (Washington: IADB, 1999); *Small Arms Survey 2008: Risk and Resilience* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008).

28. At the interpersonal and individual levels, risk factors include negative peer influences such as the presence of gangs, violent images of masculinity and power, weak family cohesion, low educational achievement, a sense of disempowerment and despair, and past exposure to violence. Such risk factors are present to varying degrees in different regions of the world, but can be exacerbated in fragile States with weak mechanisms for conflict resolution, low levels of trust in State institutions, and inadequate provision of security, justice, and social protection. Such risk factors erode the trust, norms and networks that usually contribute to the safety and security of society.

29. In contrast to the risk factors for armed violence, the resilience of individuals and communities is another part of the equation. Resilience is the capacity of individuals and communities to overcome adversity and to respond to risk in a positive fashion that allows positive patterns of development and social, political or economic interaction to thrive. Resilience factors, including respect for rule of law, family cohesion, social connectedness and attachment to social institutions, high participation in community associations, and availability of social services, have a critical function in enabling households and communities to avoid or overcome armed violence.

**Prevention and reduction**

30. Just as there is no single cause of armed violence, there is no single solution. Armed violence prevention and reduction programmes must take a wide range of risk and resilience factors into account, and engage all relevant stakeholders. Current efforts to contain and reduce armed violence are generally dealt with by military and policing institutions, public health and education agencies, or a variety of civil society organizations that focus on conflict prevention, peacebuilding, transitional justice and community development. Programmes are, however, not always designed on the basis of a solid diagnosis of the problem or comprehensive evidence of what works and what does not.

## III. Responses within the United Nations and outside

31. A number of international conventions and agreements target different aspects of armed violence. Some focus on controlling the availability of illicit small arms and light weapons while others emphasize counter-terrorism, narcotics control and the protection of human rights and vulnerable groups. Important instruments include the Protocol against the Illicit Manufacturing of and Trafficking in Firearms, Their Parts and Components and Ammunition, supplementing the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime (hereunder referred to as Firearms Protocol); the Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects (hereunder referred to as Programme of Action); World Health Assembly resolutions on the prevention of violence; the Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women; the three conventions on narcotic drugs; the universal conventions and protocols against terrorism; the Universal Declaration of Human Rights; the International Covenants on Civil and Political Rights and on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights; the conventions on the rights of women and children; and Security Council resolutions 1325 (2000) and 1820 (2008) on women, peace and security, and the 2005 World Summit Outcome document.

32. In combating armed violence, especially against vulnerable populations in conflict and post-conflict settings, peacekeeping and peacebuilding activities should include armed violence reduction as a priority goal, as underlined for instance in the Secretary-General's report on peacebuilding in the immediate aftermath of conflict (A/63/881-S/2009/304). Peacekeeping and peacebuilding settings require a wide range of interventions in order to effectively break the twin "conflict" and "violence" trap. They include the effective deployment of peacekeeping forces, the disarmament, demobilization and reintegration of ex-combatants, fostering the promulgation of the rule of law including security sector reform, and longer-term reconstruction and rebuilding efforts, including establishing an enabling environment for government service delivery, economic performance and employment opportunities and investing in decentralized dispute resolution mechanisms that can help to prevent armed violence.

33. The Millennium Development Goals, with their focus on establishing clear targets and indicators for reducing underdevelopment, also address risk factors often associated with armed violence onset and severity. Although the linkage between armed violence and development is not explicit in the Millennium Development Goals, they offer entry-points for development agencies to consider. Objectives such as reducing poverty, ensuring maternal health and promoting education are all associated with effective armed violence prevention and reduction initiatives. Nevertheless, although the Millennium Declaration included a chapter on "peace and security" that is broadly related to the prevention and reduction of armed violence and insecurity, there is no Millennium Development Goal that specifically deals with conflict, violence and insecurity.

34. At the programming level, the United Nations system has frequently addressed armed violence from its respective fields of expertise. For example, some United Nations partners have focused on small arms control and promoting crime prevention strategies and plans in accordance with United Nations standards and norms, while others have worked with children and youth, on violence and injury prevention, or in the framework of urban planning.[18] The three United Nations regional centres for peace and disarmament have worked with partners in translating global action on peace and violence reduction into regional, subregional and national initiatives. Although a number of these experiences have equipped United Nations agencies with important expertise and lessons, more work remains to convert lessons learned into best practices and concrete programmes, and to facilitate their replication in additional countries and contexts.

35. A prominent example of a collaborative approach to armed violence prevention and reduction within the United Nations system is the Armed Violence Prevention Programme (AVPP). The AVPP objectives are to strengthen national capacities to reduce and prevent armed violence and the demand for small arms in specific countries; to develop enhanced policies and strategies to address armed violence from the local to the national to the global level; and to generate best practices and lessons learned in relation to violence prevention, based on rigorous

[18] Organizations including the United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research (UNIDIR), UN-Habitat, and the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) have been working to better understand municipal, local and cultural factors shaping violence in order to assist agencies in designing more appropriate interventions.

evaluations.[19] The AVPP has generated important lessons to guide the development of international policy responses to armed violence, including the need for both national and local ownership and leadership in armed violence reduction initiatives; the desirability of integrated and whole-of-government approaches that include different levels of government and different sectors and agencies; the importance of rigorous evaluation and monitoring and evidence-based programming; and the need for active involvement of civil society and community-based groups as key stakeholders.

36. International financial institutions have also developed considerable experience in armed violence prevention and reduction, and have recognized the importance of promoting development through prevention and reduction of armed violence. The World Bank has established a conflict, crime and violence unit to support the Bank's efforts to enhance the resilience of States and societies to withstand armed violence. Many of these interventions explicitly support national and municipal-level diagnosis, planning and capacity to reduce collective and interpersonal violence.

37. Member States have undertaken a range of interventions to address armed violence. Many Governments have favoured enforcement-led activities with strong military and police actions and punitive legislation. In other settings, prevention activities have been introduced, emphasizing incentives alongside punishment and deterrents. Successful activities tend to combine enforcement-led actions (such as enhanced policing) with voluntary and prevention-based programmes (such as programmes designed to help youth stay out of gangs) that address structural and proximate risks and enhance the resilience of people and communities to armed violence.

38. Donor countries have also come together in the framework of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development/Development Assistance Committee (OECD-DAC) to agree on a common approach to armed violence prevention and reduction.[20] The OECD-DAC armed violence reduction report highlights the linkages between conflict and crime, the increasing challenges posed by growing youth populations in developing countries and the overlapping security challenges present from the local to the global level. Such efforts suggest that a growing body of policy and practice is emerging and being adopted by key actors in the development sector to guide their investments in armed violence prevention and reduction policies and programmes.

39. In his 2008 report to the Security Council on small arms (S/2008/258), the Secretary-General welcomed the initiative of the Geneva Declaration on Armed Violence and Development to "address effectively the scourge of armed violence, and thereby to enhance the prospects for sustainable development at the global, regional and national levels. The Geneva Declaration, which now enjoys the support of 108 States, recognizes that the challenges presented by armed violence represent a major obstacle to the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals.[21] Mirroring the process leading towards the Millennium Development Goals, it commits signatories to achieving measurable reductions in the global burden of armed violence by 2015.

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[19] See www.who.int/violence_injury_prevention/violence/activities/en.

[20] *Armed Violence Reduction: Enabling Development*.

[21] See www.genevadeclaration.org.

40. The Geneva Declaration process advocates for an integrated approach to armed violence and development, and reflects an innovative collaborative partnership between donor and developing States, between civil society and Governments, and among security and development practitioners. The Geneva Declaration process is designed around three pillars of advocacy, dissemination and coordination; measurability and monitoring; and practical programming.

41. In their submissions in response to the request for their views on the relationship between armed violence and development, a number of Member States highlighted critical entry-points to address armed violence. The majority of submissions noted the relationships between arms availability and armed violence, and the uncontrolled proliferation and misuse of small arms and light weapons as a key element fuelling armed violence. Many also indicated that they had taken steps to implement the Programme of Action, thereby acknowledging the relevance of that document to their efforts in armed violence prevention and reduction. A number of submissions by Member States highlighted the threats posed by fragile States and armed conflict, the importance of tackling the risks and root causes of armed violence, and in particular the negative impact of conflict-related armed violence on development, peacebuilding and reconstruction prospects.

42. Several submissions drew specific attention to the negative impact of armed violence on the prospects for achieving the Millennium Development Goals, and the tremendous human and economic costs associated with armed violence — which reinforces the need to bring the issue of armed violence into the Millennium Development Goal review process, as noted below.

43. In their submissions, Member States present practical measures and opportunities to prevent and reduce armed violence. States put emphasis on targeting "high risk" areas and groups, ensuring that strategies are closely connected to national and local government plans, and controlling and regulating the instruments of violence. They also noted the importance of security and justice sector reform that ensure effective policing and security provision by State institutions.

44. A number of Member States, sometimes in collaboration with regional bodies, are effectively addressing armed violence at the national and subnational levels, including in cities and rural areas. Several have adopted whole-of-government approaches to addressing the risks and effects of armed violence, bringing together justice, policing, development and conflict-resolution expertise. In certain cases, Governments have integrated armed violence prevention and reduction priorities into national development strategies and poverty reduction strategy papers to ensure that key risk factors contributing to armed violence are accounted for in relevant strategies, plans and budgets. The expansion of these efforts should be encouraged.

45. A wide range of national and international civil society and non-governmental organizations from the development, humanitarian, public health, peacebuilding and human rights sectors are also assuming a proactive approach to armed violence prevention and reduction. Civil society organizations are adopting development-based approaches to armed violence prevention and reduction, focusing on modifying risk factors through youth education and employment opportunities, urban safety and design, reducing access to alcohol and lethal means, improving the quality of relationships in the home environment, and improving access to basic services such as water, health and education for vulnerable and

high-risk groups.[22] Many of these efforts are in their early stages, and need to be scaled up and harmonized in order to provide effective support to affected societies in tackling armed violence. At the national level, some Governments have initiated commendable efforts to work together with civil society to strengthen community policing, to work with marginalized groups in society, and to invest in schooling and employment opportunities, in order to provide alternatives outside a criminal environment.

## IV. Improving policies, programmes, and coordination

46. Owing to its complexity, development programming in or dealing with situations of armed violence confronts a number of challenges. Because it is a comparatively new area of practice, effective programming requires a careful and evidence-based assessment of the dynamics of armed violence: the risk and protective factors shaping its onset, duration and termination. It is only through a clear analysis of the drivers of violence, the profile and motivations of perpetrators, and the functioning of the institutional environment that effective interventions can be constructed and tailored appropriately.

47. Over the past years, development practitioners have advocated sensitivity to security factors when working on policy and programming in fragile and post-conflict settings. Adopting an equivalent focus on armed violence factors could be beneficial when addressing the role of preventing and reducing interpersonal armed violence to encourage development.[23] This would encourage development practitioners in different contexts to identify the actors involved in the perpetration of violence, the strength or weakness of community and State institutions that facilitate or prevent violence, the availability and sources of weapons used in violent acts, and the specific nature of groups affected by armed violence.

48. Conflict-sensitive approaches can be readily adapted to non-conflict situations including environments characterized by high levels of interpersonal and criminal violence. Such programming requires the inputs and perspectives of local actors and beneficiaries on an ongoing basis. Early diagnosis and analysis can further help to ensure appropriate and effective armed violence prevention and reduction measures.

49. Approaches to armed violence prevention and reduction span multiple sectors and draw on a range of disciplines. It is not unusual to encounter effective interventions that are funded by development donors and the private sector, facilitated by a combination of public sector departments, and executed by public health organizations, police and justice agencies and a host of non-governmental agencies and social science experts. The complexity of armed violence in war and non-war situations and the influence of global, national and local factors mean that violence reduction for development requires a multisector and multidisciplinary approach and a high level of communication and interactivity and an emphasis on approaches which have an established effectiveness in terms of either preventing armed violence or reducing its risk factors.

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[22] See, for example, a civil society organization's submission "Advancing the Agenda on Armed Violence", 2009 (www.un.org/disarmament/convarms/SALW/Docs/AV-NGOVIEWS/AVD_NGO_submission.pdf).

[23] *Armed Violence Reduction*, pp. 49-58.

50. Member States should be encouraged to design and implement intersectoral national and municipal strategies, engaging all relevant institutions, to address armed violence as a means to enhance development prospects. It is equally important that relevant private sector, civil society and research entities are involved in order to ensure that these strategies are appropriately targeted, monitored and evaluated. Ideally, strategies should establish clear benchmarks of effectiveness and adequate financial resources to ensure sustained interventions and to maximize development gains.

51. The international community has an important function in supporting the development of national and local capacities to design and implement armed violence prevention and reduction programmes and strategies. This could involve not only support for the development of national strategies (governmental and non-governmental), but assistance in the development of national and local data collection and surveillance systems, and assistance for building national technical capacities.

52. There are at least two types of programming options for development agencies and practitioners. The first is a direct approach and entails interventions that specifically target particular risk factors associated with actors and instruments of armed violence. Such interventions are relatively novel to the development community, but offer important opportunities to enhance real and perceived security. Typical direct interventions could include restrictions on the carrying of different kinds of weapons, targeted policing for the search and seizure of firearms, so-called gun-free zones established by public authorities and communities in defined geographic areas, restrictions on the availability of alcohol in high-violence areas, and weapons-for-development activities.

53. The second type of programming is more indirect and includes development programming that is sensitive to the specific risks, resilience factors, and outcomes of armed violence, particularly among high-risk groups. The primary objectives of indirect interventions are conventional development objectives, such as reducing poverty, improving education outcomes, or improving governance, but when made sensitive to the consideration of armed violence prevention, these interventions can take advantage of opportunities to reduce risks and enhance resilience. For example, school completion incentive programmes, preschool enrichment and parent training programmes targeted at vulnerable groups, urban renewal schemes that address slums affected by chronic violence, or public health education programmes that include modules on domestic violence and gender-based violence all represent examples of indirect programming. While the distinctions between direct and indirect programming are not always clear-cut, they nevertheless can help to distinguish a range of ongoing interventions.

54. There are a number of effective direct and indirect interventions that have been launched in North and South America, the Caribbean, Africa, Western and Eastern Europe, South-East Asia and the South Pacific. While many of these have not been comprehensively evaluated, they offer important entry-points for armed violence prevention and reduction programming. Many of the more constructive efforts have combined direct and indirect programming streams as the cases described below make clear.[24]

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[24] WHO, *Preventing violence and reducing its impact: How development agencies can help* (Geneva: WHO, 2008). The report identifies 10 scientifically credible violence-prevention strategies that could be integrated into violence-sensitive development programming (chap. IV).

**Criminal justice and capacity development of law enforcement institutions**

55. A functioning criminal justice and security system based on the rule of law is integral to armed violence prevention and reduction. Effective and legitimate laws and services help in deterring armed violence and reducing impunity. The creation of accountable and professional law enforcement and policing capacities covering all of the State and reaching all of its citizens, support for an independent, accessible and competent judiciary, effective correctional services, and multisector crime- and violence-prevention strategies are critical to armed violence reduction.[25] A range of assistance programmes have been designed to help to build effective and accountable security institutions, acting within the rule of law, as part of efforts to prevent and reduce armed violence. Throughout Latin America and the Caribbean, for example, a combination of national efforts and more targeted community policing and neighbourhood watch interventions in lower-income and impoverished areas have generated important dividends.

**Post-conflict peacebuilding**

56. Post-conflict contexts are as complex and varied as war-affected environments, and some post-conflict situations have rates of armed violence that are higher than during the conflict. Many post-conflict programmes, including those for the disarmament, demobilization and reintegration of former combatants, for the strengthening of the justice and security sectors, and for dialogue, reconciliation and transitional justice, have an important armed violence reduction goal. Sustainable and long-term support to peacebuilding efforts is crucial, and the international community should support efforts to strengthen legitimate and accountable States, as well as local capacities for dialogue and peacebuilding, by addressing issues of democratic governance, capacity development, human rights and civil society engagement.

**Firearms regulation, drug policy and alcohol controls**

57. There is considerable evidence that the combination of weapons, alcohol and narcotics availability can dramatically increase the risk of armed violence.[26] A number of interventions launched throughout Latin America — particularly at the local level — have combined temporary restrictions on the selling of alcohol with enhanced regulation on firearms in areas experiencing epidemic rates of armed violence. These interventions are credited with major improvements in public safety and security and a considerable reduction in armed violence.

**Urban renewal**

58. Effective efforts to prevent armed violence are often closely connected to changes in the urban environment that enhance public safety.[27] In many areas from North and South America to Western Europe and South-East and East Asia, for example, urban planners have sought to repair and rebuild transportation systems

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[25] Kirsti Samuels, "Rule of Law Reform in Post-Conflict Countries: Operational Initiatives and Lessons Learnt", Social Development Papers, Working Paper No. 37 (Washington: World Bank, October 2006).

[26] *Alcohol and Interpersonal Violence*, Policy Briefing (Geneva: WHO, 2006).

[27] UN-Habitat, *Global Report on Human Settlements 2007: Enhancing Urban Safety and Security* (London: Earthscan Publications Ltd., 2007).

and reclaim deteriorating urban spaces in order to enhance opportunities for coexistence and restore the pride and dignity of communities. Agencies such as the World Bank and the Inter-American Development Bank, together with United Nations agencies such as the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) and the United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat) have actively supported crime prevention through environmental design.

**Community safety and security**

59. Many promising armed violence prevention and reduction initiatives are implemented at the community level, where local ownership can be more easily established and programmes tailored to local needs and challenges. Existing initiatives in this area focus on working with community leaders, local government officials and representatives from community-based organizations to identify their own security and safety needs and to develop and implement appropriate responses — often captured in community or citizen security plans. Support for such programmes can include working with associations of municipal leaders, spreading the lessons learned from successful programmes, and strengthening the capacity of local governments and other community structures to meet the security needs of their population.

**At-risk youth and women**

60. Youth are critically susceptible to perpetration of and victimization from armed violence. Early interventions focusing on strengthening positive relationships between infants and their parents or caregivers, school security, maintaining enrolment, the reproduction of civic values, appropriate juvenile justice systems, and support for single-parent households are critical. In order to promote armed violence prevention for children, stakeholders should implement the recommendations contained in the report of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict (A/62/228); and note by the Secretary-General transmitting the report of the independent expert for the United Nations study on violence against children (see A/61/299). Women's roles as heads of households and as primary caregivers, and in community reconciliation efforts, make their involvement in the design and implementation of armed violence prevention and reduction programmes indispensable. Support to the victims and survivors of armed violence is also important to rebuilding communities, families and lives.

**Social and human capital**

61. A primary objective of development programming is to enhance human and societal potential. Armed violence often erupts in areas experiencing low levels of trust, limited community organization, and short-term horizons for investment and spending. Innovative activities from South-East Asia to Latin America have sought to promote coexistence, support civic culture, increase non-violent conflict resolution, and identify alternative forms of expression through culture and sport in order to generate a basis for preventing and reducing armed violence.

62. Interventions to promote armed violence prevention and reduction should be accompanied by a robust monitoring and evaluation system and good baseline data

collection in order to track changes in patterns of armed violence over time. Although there are exceptions, many armed violence prevention and reduction interventions have been implemented but not evaluated. It is essential that national and municipal strategies and interventions are routinely examined and that information is made public so that good practices and successful programmes can be identified and promoted while actors are dissuaded from pursuing ineffective approaches. Governments and partner donor agencies should invest and budget for effective monitoring and evaluation systems.

# V. Observations and recommendations

63. Tackling armed violence successfully requires coordinated responses that draw on different areas of expertise. Many Governments, civil society actors and United Nations entities are starting to work together to address risk factors and the negative effects of armed violence on development, but the international response is still somewhat fragmented. In bringing together donors, Governments of affected States and civil society, as well as in uniting core competencies and developing good practices, the United Nations system is well-positioned to help catalyse more coherent, comprehensive, coordinated and integrated initiatives, and to encourage targeted armed violence prevention and reduction policies and programmes at the international, national and local levels.

64. In order to be successful, policy responses must involve meaningful and legitimate local ownership, and full partnerships between Governments and civil society. They must also be integrated into regional and subregional approaches.

65. In order to be effective in its role as a convenor and catalyst, the United Nations system, as well as national and local governments and civil society, will need to scale up support to affected States in designing and implementing armed violence prevention and response strategies. The following recommendations are proposed:

(a) Strengthen the implementation of existing global conventions and agreements. There is a range of existing agreements that can contribute to the prevention and reduction of armed violence. United Nations agencies should support national Governments to uphold, implement and strengthen existing global and regional norms and measures, including relevant international and regional treaties, conventions and other instruments that contribute to the reduction and prevention of all forms of armed violence. These include the Firearms Protocol; the Programme of Action; the universal conventions and protocols against terrorism; the three conventions on narcotic drugs; the Universal Declaration of Human Rights; the International Covenants on Civil and Political Rights and on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights; the conventions on the rights of women and children; Security Council resolutions 1325 (2000) and 1820 (2008) on women, peace and security; and the 2005 World Summit Outcome document. There should also be a concerted effort to ensure that international norms and standards are reflected and implemented at the national and local levels through the adoption of national legislation and other domestic measures.

(b) Improve the effectiveness of armed violence prevention and reduction policies and programmes through investments in the production, analysis and use of evidence. Effective approaches to armed-violence prevention and reduction will

require investments by national Governments and international organizations in high-quality data-gathering and analysis capacities. Comprehensive, reliable and timely information is critical for informed policymaking and programming, monitoring and evaluation, and the forecasting of future trends and needs. This will involve ongoing and baseline data collection and analysis, the regular transfer of knowledge and lessons learned and innovative approaches to bring evidence and analysis into the programming process. The most comprehensive picture of conflict, non-conflict and interpersonal armed violence is likely to be obtained from a combination of data drawn from the public health and criminal justice systems, combined with population-based surveys, civil society monitoring, as well as rich historical and cultural research. Routine monitoring and evaluation of armed violence prevention programmes will increase the range of evidence-based options to prevent armed violence available to national authorities, local authorities and civil society.

(c) Strengthen national and local capacities for armed violence prevention and reduction. States have the primary responsibility for preventing and reducing armed violence. Multilateral and bilateral agencies can support Governments of affected countries by strengthening national and local capacities to address armed violence, including capacities to collect reliable data on the scope and scale of armed violence and victimization, and on different risk and resilience factors. This could include the development of national armed violence prevention and reduction strategies, investments in national and local surveillance systems, establishment of effective criminal justice systems based upon the rule of law, including reinforcement of counter-terrorism and policing capacities, and support for programmes targeting specific risk factors and at-risk groups. International agencies and national Governments can also ensure that armed violence prevention and reduction practices are integrated into wider development strategies, such as United Nations Development Assistance Frameworks, Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers, and other national and local plans. Local actors and in particular governments, community authorities (including local governments and community peace and security committees), research institutions and the media should be supported and strengthened in order to design, implement and measure the effectiveness of local strategies and interventions. Several United Nations stakeholders can be involved in these activities, including the three United Nations regional centres for peace and disarmament.

(d) Develop measurable goals, targets and indicators for armed-violence prevention and reduction. A growing body of evidence demonstrates how armed violence hinders the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals and, more generally, social, economic, political and human development. Yet armed violence reduction efforts are seldom incorporated into strategies for achieving the Millennium Development Goals. The Millennium Development Goal Review Process, starting in 2010, provides an opportunity to consider the reduction of armed violence as an important requisite to meeting the Millennium Development Goals, in particular through the development and endorsement of a set of goals, targets and indicators to achieve measurable reductions in armed violence and tangible improvements in human security. Developing measurable goals on armed violence towards 2015 will offer the opportunity to integrate security-related themes into the possible follow-up of the Millennium Development Goals (see S/2008/258).

(e) Ensure that armed-violence prevention and reduction efforts are coherent and coordinated. Multilateral and bilateral donors could work further on adopting harmonized approaches to violence prevention and reduction.[28] Certain coordination mechanisms already exist in the United Nations through the United Nations Development Group (UNDG), inter-agency coordination mechanisms, the United Nations Development Account and the Resident Coordinator system. Coordination could be further sustained by training and support on armed violence prevention and reduction for United Nations resident coordinators to enable them to monitor potential risk factors for armed violence and to ensure coordinated United Nations country team efforts to support national capacities. Coherence could also be enhanced through joint United Nations programmes such as AVPP and the Coordinating Action on Small Arms, which include joint assessments to inform the development of coordinated support programmes, and through strengthened leadership within the United Nations system, as noted in the Secretary-General's report on peacebuilding in the immediate aftermath of conflict (A/63/881-S/2009/304).

(f) Increase resources for armed-violence prevention and reduction. Scaling up armed violence prevention and reduction efforts requires increased levels of technical and financial support at the multilateral, national and local levels. The United Nations is not only well-placed to ensure coordinated and multisectoral approaches, but also has experience that can be used to catalyse support for innovative and effective armed violence prevention and reduction programmes and projects. Improved support can also involve identifying and disseminating best practices and innovative approaches to armed violence prevention and reduction, within and beyond the community of development practitioners.

(g) Build partnerships between sectors, between agencies, and with civil society. The United Nations system can facilitate international and regional partnerships on armed-violence prevention. This should include partnerships between donors, affected Governments and civil society, as well as the strengthening of South-South and regional cooperation. In-country, United Nations agencies can assist in the development of strong and sustainable partnerships between Governments and civil society, which are essential to effective violence prevention and reduction programming.

(h) Foster greater international action. It is important to build greater awareness of the negative impact of armed violence on development. This could partially be achieved through inclusion of the armed violence issue in meetings on the Programme of Action, which are mandated to consider implementation of all aspects of the issue, including the demand for small arms which stems primarily from high levels of armed violence. Also, there is a need to explore in greater depth the negative impact of armed violence on development, to examine the adequacy of international instruments and efforts to promote violence prevention and reduction, to propose ways and means to encourage a holistic approach to tackling armed violence in conflict, post-conflict, non-conflict and interpersonal settings, to advance towards a common understanding of armed violence, and to examine

[28] Donor coordination on armed violence prevention is already taking place within the OECD-DAC framework, and in some cases in-country (under UNDP leadership). The latter could be replicated in more countries affected by armed violence so that the United Nations and donors can provide a more coordinated support to government and civil society.

practical steps to achieve armed violence prevention and reduction, as a means to enhance sustainable human, social and economic development. Therefore, there is merit in a further in-depth discussion on the issue; Member States may wish to determine the appropriate ways and means to do so.

(i) Make a sustained commitment. It is important for all actors engaged in armed violence prevention and reduction initiatives to acknowledge the challenges that all stakeholders face. Successful efforts will require sustainable long-term commitments to violence prevention and reduction strategies as part of overall progress towards achieving sustainable human, social and economic development.